

The TWELVE

for JULY 2008

Spec'ssm

YOU LOVE GREAT WINE ... but you also want some "everyday value wines" that taste really good. So do I. I love great wine, but \$15 is about my limit for my *everyday drinking wines*. To me, *value* mean a wine tastes like it costs more than it does and *everyday drinking* means wine that goes well with my life and the sorts of food I eat on a daily basis. Here are my twelve everyday value picks for July 2008, all priced under \$15. - Bear Dalton, Spec's Fine Wine Buyer

VILLA MARIA "Unoaked" Chardonnay, Hawkes Bay, 2007
12x750ml \$11.57 \$128.77
From the warmer Hawkes Bay region, this 100% Chardonnay is fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks. Only 20% is put through malo-lactic fermentation. The result is a balanced, fresh, clean Chardonnay offering ripe tropical fruit with an almost Riesling-like tension between the fruit and the acidity. Quite lively in the mouth with the real flavor of Chardonnay. Fine. BS: 88+HR.

EBERLE Steinbeck Vineyard Syrah, Paso Robles, 2004
12x750ml \$11.99 \$135.13
This 100% Syrah from the Steinbeck vineyard's own-rooted (un-grafted) Chapoutier clone vines planted in 1980 is aged in all seasoned French oak (no new barrels). It is a big, dark, terroir-and-earth-laden Syrah with ripe dark red fruit accented with a mix of black and white pepper and a coffee grounds earthiness. Really lasts in the mouth. Really Fine. BS: 90HR.

CLIF "The Climber" White, California, 2006
12x750ml \$10.83 \$121.95
A stainless steel-fermented, no malo-lactic, organically grown blend of 80% Sauvignon Blanc, 12% Semillon, 6% Viognier, and 2% Chenin Blanc, this is minerally and focused with sweet citrus and mixed apple and pear fruit. Light to medium weight, balanced, and flavorful, it is clean, fresh, and food friendly; a fine "house white" choice. Yum. Fine. BS: 89+HR.

PINE RIDGE Chenin Blanc Viognier, California, 2007
12x750ml \$10.99 \$122.33
A perennial favorite, this temperature-controlled stainless-steel tank-fermented blend of 80% Chenin Blanc and 20% Viognier does not undergo a malo-lactic fermentation and gets no oak barrel aging so the fruit flavors stay fresh and alive. The result is a floral, perfumed, summer-weight white offering juicy lemon, peach, and apricot fruit with accents of honeysuckle and lemon drops in a light weight, subtly textured style that lasts nicely before finishing clean. While it will make a fine summer evening's aperitif or serve as a Sunday afternoon sipper, it does have enough "umph" to handle lighter dishes. Solidly Fine. BS: 88+HR.

YALUMBA "Y-Series" Pinot Grigio, South Australia, 2007
12x750ml \$9.51 \$105.78
This juicy, lively no oak, no malolactic (making it a "No-No Wine") 100% Pinot Gris offers lime and pear fruit with notes of minerals, pear peel, and citrus zest. Fresh as it is, it still offers some subtlety and a nice balance between crisp and rich. Quite yummy. Fine. BS: 88VHR.

BOMMARITO Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2005
12x750ml \$14.95 \$168.36
A blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot, this "2nd wine" of Whitehall Lane offers sweet black fruit with hints of tobacco, earth, cocoa, and black pepper. Made in a juicy, easy-to-drink commercial (but in a good way) style, this is a fine "grillin' red" that can handle an everyday steak or chop. Sweet with fruit to the end. Fine. BS: 88+HR.

SHOO FLY "Chook Raffle" Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, 2007
12x750ml \$9.49 \$105.81
90% of this unusual blend of 95% Chardonnay with 3% Riesling and 2% Verdelho is fermented in stainless steel tanks. The remaining 10% is fermented in used French oak barrels. None of it goes through malolactic fermentation. The result is a bright and lively white offering juicy apple, mixed citrus, green pear, and green banana fruit with a thrilling tension in the mouth. Quite refreshing with a hint of the exotic. Delicious. Fine. BS: 88+ VHR

BABICH "Lone Tree" Unoaked Chardonnay, Hawkes Bay, 2006
12x750ml \$13.23 \$147.42
This 100% Chardonnay from the warmer Hawkes Bay region of the North Island of New Zealand was fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks. Only an unspecified portion was allowed to undergo malo-lactic fermentation. Both portions were blended together, filtered, and bottled together to create a sweet, bright, fresh white offering lime, pear, and tropical Chardonnay fruit in a clean and very refreshing style. It is juicy and rich but still focused in the mouth. Solid and delicious. Excellent. BS: 91VHR

MOMMESSIN Beaujolais-Villages Vieilles Vignes 2006
12x750ml \$8.45 \$95.16
This 100% Gamay old vine (*Vieilles Vignes*) cuvee was made utilizing both carbonic maceration and a standard Burgundian pigeage fermentation. The result is a fresh, balanced, lively Beaujolais offering red cherry and raspberry fruit with notes of toast, black pepper, and subtle earth. It finishes clean and fresh. Perfect for a salad or to go with a store-bought roast chicken or a summer picnic. Serve very cool (50°). Really Very Good. BS: 87HR.

KENWOOD Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma, 2006
12x750ml \$9.99 \$110.02
This 100% Sauvignon Blanc is fermented and aged three months in French oak barrels (50% new); only 30% of it undergoes malolactic fermentation. The result is a juicy rich and softly balanced style of Sauvignon Blanc offering citrus and tree fruit and a distinct note of cut grass. Despite the oak and malo-lactic richness, it finishes in focus and fresh. Really Very Good. BS: 87+HR.

Ch. LEPINE, Bordeaux, 2006
12x750ml \$8.78 \$98.28
Mostly Merlot - with a bit of Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc - grown on shallow clay over limestone high above the east bank of the Garonne river, this light-weight, old-style "Claret" for everyday drinking offers red cherry-berry fruit with notes of black pepper, tobacco, minerals, and dust with a dark hint of floral character. Yum! While this is not a "great wine", it is distinct pleasure to drink. Serve Cool. Very Good. BS: 86+VHR.

TOSCA Prosecco, IGT de Veneto, NV
12x750ml \$10.98 \$124.44
Labeled "Vino Frizzante", the bottle for this lightly sparkling style of Prosecco is finished with an unusual hybrid wine cork/Champagne cork held in the bottle with a string. Interesting packaging aside, this nicely bubbling wine is crisp and fresh with lemon and green pear fruit accented with toast and minerals. It has good length and a fresh feel in the mouth. Fine everyday fizz. Really Very Good. BS: 87+HR.

Special for SPEC's KEY holders:

Buy a mixed case consisting of one 750ml bottle of each of The TWELVE for JULY 2008 selections for only \$121.95, a savings of \$8.81 over SPEC's already low cash bottle price. This special price is good through 08/04/08. UPC: 00000656306

